

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims is provided for the Examiner's convenience and will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. No claims are amended.

1-139. (Canceled)

140. (Previously Presented) A method comprising:

discovering, by a computer system, internal and external data related to a plurality of components to be procured by an enterprise, wherein the internal data originates from one or more data sources internal to the enterprise, and wherein the external data originates from one or more data sources external to the enterprise;

storing, by the computer system, the discovered internal and external data in a data mart;

analyzing, by the computer system, the internal and external data using a first analysis module to determine criticality ratings for the plurality of components, wherein the criticality rating for a component indicates the strategic importance of the component to operations of the enterprise, and wherein the analyzing performed using the first analysis module is based on a first set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data;

analyzing, by the computer system, the internal and external data using a second analysis module to forecast prices for the plurality of components set by suppliers external to the enterprise, wherein the analyzing performed using the second analysis module is based on a second set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data;

analyzing, by the computer system, the internal and external data using a third analysis module to determine optimal inventory levels for the plurality of components, wherein the analyzing performed using the third analysis module is based on a third set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data;

recommending by the computer system, one or more proposed actions to take with respect to procurement of the plurality of components based on the analyzing performed using the first, second, and third analysis modules; and

providing, by the computer system, one or more computer-initiated options for fully or partially executing an action in the one or more proposed actions.

141. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the discovered internal and external data stored in the data mart is organized for querying and report generation, and represented to the user in a plurality of formats.

142. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, further comprising producing, by the computer system, one or more reports based on the analyzing performed using the first, second, and third analysis modules, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding an impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the plurality of components, and wherein the one or more reports include information displayed in one or more graphical formats.

143. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 142, wherein the one or more graphical formats include a table, chart, graph, or map.

144. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, further comprising producing, by the computer system, one or more reports based on the analyzing performed using the first, second, and third analysis modules, wherein the one or more reports provide the user with information regarding an impact or potential impact of the discovered internal and external data on procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing decisions in the enterprise with respect to the plurality of components, and wherein the one or more reports include information represented in one or more non-graphical formats.

145. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 144, wherein the one or more non-graphical formats include a news bulletin, an alert box, or an audio message.

146-149. (Canceled)

150. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data assists the user in identifying parameters for criteria relevant to procurement decisions, sourcing decisions and strategic sourcing in the enterprise regarding the plurality of components.

151. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 150, wherein the parameters are user-defined.

152-154. (Canceled)

155. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the steps of analyzing the discovered internal and external data using the first, second, and third analysis modules uses data from the step of discovering the internal and external data to produce one or more reports intended to assist the user in procurement decisions, sourcing decisions, or strategic sourcing decisions.

156. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of recommending one or more proposed actions uses data from the steps of analyzing the discovered internal and external data using the first, second, and third analysis modules to make recommendations for possible actions based on the discovered internal and external data.

157. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the steps of analyzing the discovered internal and external data using the first, second, and third analysis modules collects data from the step of discovering the internal and external data and additional data from user input to make recommendations in real time.

158. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions uses data from the steps of analyzing the discovered internal and external data using the first, second, and third analysis modules as input for the user to decide which recommendations to execute and when to execute them.

159. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data collects, integrates and displays graphical and non-graphical data.

160-161. (Canceled)

162. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of discovering internal and external data includes extraction, transformation and loading of data, scanning of data that has been aggregated across a single business unit or across multiple business units of the enterprise, conducting of real-time searching, and customizing of real-time alerts and news feeds.

163-168. (Canceled)

169. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions enables the user to set automation levels at either a first level, which provides a greater range of permitted automated actions, or at a second level, which provides a more restricted range of permitted automated actions.

170. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 169, wherein additional automation levels are selectable by the user, providing a plurality of customized ranges of permitted automated actions.

171. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions provides agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes.

172. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions initiates a transaction via another application, carries out one or a plurality of transactions, and changes information in the another application.

173. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the step of executing one or more actions includes providing agents that follow user-defined rules to enable hands-free handling of user-defined exceptions and processes, initiating a transaction via another application, and carrying out certain transactions, wherein the certain transactions include generating and sending out a RFQ and changing discovered internal and external data in an internal application.

174. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, wherein the internal and external data are reintegrated into the data mart after each step of the method is performed, and wherein the data is continuously incorporated into the data mart automatically or at predetermined or other intervals.

175-181. (Canceled)

182. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140, further comprising alerting the user of conditions that are relevant to the user's tasks in procurement, sourcing, or strategic sourcing.

183. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 182, wherein the conditions include values, combinations of values, and conditions for the values and combinations of values.

184-229. (Canceled)

230. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140 further comprising:
analyzing, by the computer system, the internal and external data using a fourth analysis module to identify components in the plurality of components that are shortage risks, wherein the analyzing performed using the fourth analysis module is based on a fourth set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data.

231. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140 further comprising:

analyzing, by the computer system, the internal and external data using a fourth analysis module to determine, for each component in the plurality of components, an allocation of a purchase quantity of the component across a set of suppliers, wherein the allocation is based on contractual obligations with the set of suppliers and performance ratings for the set of suppliers, and wherein the analyzing performed using the fourth analysis module is based on a fourth set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data.

232. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140 further comprising:
receiving, by the computer system, a condition pertaining to the internal or external data; and
if the condition is satisfied, sending an alert to the user.

233. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140 wherein the criticality rating for a component in the plurality of components is based on one or more variables including profit impact of the component, a number of products that would be affected by a shortage of the component, and a current inventory level of the component.

234. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140 wherein the optimal inventory levels for the plurality of components are based on inventory holding costs, revenue impact of stocking out of the components, and warehouse constraints.

235. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 140 wherein the one or more data sources internal to the enterprise include:

a supplier database comprising information about suppliers of the plurality of components;

a contracts database comprising information about supplier contracts;

an internal parts database comprising information about products incorporating the plurality of components;

a supply chain data database comprising information about inventory levels for the plurality of components, warehouse locations, and production schedules; and

an enterprise resource planning (ERP) database comprising information about accounting ledgers and financial records related to the plurality of components.

236. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 235 wherein the one or more data sources external to the enterprise include:

electronic product databases comprising information about products sold by one or more external suppliers, the information including pricing, availability, and lead time; and subscription sources comprising information about industry trends and market news.

237. (Previously Presented) A system comprising:

a storage device configured to store internal and external data related to a plurality of components to be procured by an enterprise, wherein the internal data originates from one or more data sources internal to the enterprise, and wherein the external data originates from one or more data sources external to the enterprise; and

a processing component communicatively coupled with the storage device, the processing component being configured to:

analyze the internal and external data-using a first analysis module to determine criticality ratings for the plurality of components, wherein the criticality rating for a component indicates the strategic importance of the component to operations of the enterprise, and wherein the analyzing performed using the first analysis module is based-on a first set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data;

analyze the internal and external data using a second analysis module to forecast prices for the plurality of components set by suppliers external to the enterprise, wherein the analyzing performed using the second analysis module is based on a second set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data;

analyze the internal and external data using a third analysis module to determine optimal inventory levels for the plurality of components, wherein the analyzing performed using the third analysis module is based on a third set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data;

recommend one or more proposed actions to take with respect to procurement-of the plurality of components based on the analyzing performed using the first, second, and third analysis modules; and

provide one or more computer-initiated options for fully or partially executing an action in the one or more proposed actions.

238. (Previously Presented) A computer readable storage medium having stored thereon instructions executable by a computer system, the instructions comprising:

instructions that cause the computer system to discover internal and external data related to a plurality of components to be procured by an enterprise, wherein the internal data originates from one or more data sources internal to the enterprise, and wherein the external data originates from one or more data sources external to the enterprise;

instructions that cause the computer system to store the discovered internal and external data in a data mart;

instructions that cause the computer system to analyze the internal and external data-using a first analysis module to determine criticality ratings for the plurality of components, wherein the criticality rating for a component indicates the strategic importance of the component to operations of the enterprise, and wherein the analyzing performed using the first analysis module is based-on a first set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data;

instructions that cause the computer system to analyze the internal and external data using a second analysis module to forecast prices for the plurality of components set by suppliers external to the enterprise, wherein the analyzing performed using the second analysis module is based on a second set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data;

instructions that cause the computer system to analyze the internal and external data using a third analysis module to determine optimal inventory levels for the plurality of components, wherein the analyzing performed using the third analysis module is based on a third set of user-defined parameters that qualify the internal or external data;

instructions that cause the computer system to recommend one or more proposed actions to take with respect to procurement-of the plurality of components based on the analyzing performed using the first, second, and third analysis modules; and

instructions that cause the computer system to provide one or more computer-initiated options for fully or partially executing an action in the one or more proposed actions.